

January 22nd, 2014

Subject: Comments on Medicaid 1115 Draft Application

As Co-Chairs of the Home Visiting Task Force of the Illinois Early Learning Council, we value the opportunity to provide comments in response to the draft of Illinois' Medicaid 1115 waiver application.

We appreciate that the draft waiver application mentions home visiting programs under the first goal of the waiver, which is to "support linkages between health care delivery systems and services that directly impact key social determinants of health". However, at the most recent stakeholder meeting on the waiver application, we learned that the State is reconsidering expanding home visiting programs through the 1115 waiver, and is considering alternate vehicles. Recent media coverage of the waiver also does not mention home visiting as one of the services being considered.

We are currently in discussions regarding additional strategies for expanding home visiting programs via Medicaid funding, but we want to keep all options moving forward at this time. Therefore, we strongly urge you to include home visiting programs under the State's 1115 waiver application. For the reasons outlined below, we believe that accessing additional federal funding for home visiting through the Medicaid waiver will advance the State's health care reform goals.

Home Visiting and Health

The foundation of many of the skills and capabilities needed to succeed in adulthood begins in the first five years of life, with the prenatal period through the first three years of life being particularly critical. This critical period lays a strong or fragile foundation for later health, cognitive and social-emotional development, and behavior. Babies born into environments with certain risk factors including poverty and domestic violence are more likely to experience poorer health, which results in negative health outcomes throughout their lives.

Just as the root of these challenges lies in the earliest years, so does the solution. Focusing on at-risk families during the most critical period of brain development, voluntary home visiting programs

promote positive parenting practices and build healthy parent-child relationships, which makes them an essential strategy for reducing child abuse and neglect, improving health outcomes for mothers and children, and increasing school readiness. National and Illinois-specific research studies show that high-quality evidence-based home visiting programs result in the following positive health outcomes for children and their families:

- Fewer subsequent pregnancies within two years, and longer birth intervals, both of which are important indicators in improved birth outcomes.
- Fewer birth complications for subsequent pregnancies.
- A trending reduction in admissions to neonatal intensive care units for subsequent births.
- Higher likelihood of children being fully immunized. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), every dollar spent on childhood immunizations results in a savings of \$18.40 from future medical and other societal costs.
- Lower incidence of children needing treatment for injuries.
- Increased rates of breastfeeding.
- More linkages to medical home and utilization of well-child visits. A study published in the July 2001 issue of *Pediatrics* found that the likelihood of avoidable hospitalizations was reduced by 48% for Medicaid children who were up to date with well child visits. A 2003 cost analysis related to this study conducted by the University of Washington found that this reduction in hospitalization resulted in an annual Medicaid savings of at least \$591, 893.
- Reduced risk for child maltreatment due to the promotion of positive parenting skills.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide comments on Illinois' 1115 Medicaid waiver draft application. For the reasons outlined above, we strongly believe that continuing to include home

visiting programs in the new services provided under the waiver will advance the State's healthcare redesign goals.

If you have any questions or would like additional information on anything mentioned in these comments, please do not hesitate to contact us as you weigh your decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gaylord Gieseke". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Gaylord Gieseke
Co-Chair, Home Visiting Task Force
President, Voices for Illinois Children

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Diana M. Rauner". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Diana Rauner
Co-Chair, Home Visiting Task Force
President, Ounce of Prevention Fund